



HABINTEG SUPPORT

**AN INFORMATION LEAFLET ABOUT
HABINTEG'S SUPPORTED HOUSING SERVICE**

2010

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Habinteg’s support service is provided between 9.00 am to 5.00 pm. Your Community Assistant or Support Worker will usually be able to deal with most situations, but we recommend that if there is a medical or police emergency, you contact the emergency services without delay: call 999.

If your Community Assistant or Support Worker is not available, then you can contact Habinteg Direct. This is Habinteg’s Customer Service team, and is available between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm. Our Customer Services team is fully trained in all aspects of Habinteg’s work and will be able to offer assistance in most circumstances.

Contact details:

LONDON OFFICE

Holyer House
20 – 21 Red Lion Court
London
EC4A 3EB

BRADFORD OFFICE

Beech House
Woodland park
Bradford road
Chain bar
Bradford
BD19 6BW

Habinteg Direct

01274 853160 or 0845 606 2608 (call charges vary depending on telephone provider.)

LOCAL OUT OF HOURS EMERGENCY CONTACTS		
ORGANISATION	TEL NO.	DESCRIPTION

What kind of support does Habinteg provide?

The support Habinteg provides focuses on enabling people to achieve or maintain independent living in their own homes.

Habinteg provides housing related support for people with:

- a physical disability,
- long term conditions such as multiple sclerosis, HIV/AIDS related conditions,
- sight and hearing loss that affect their communication, mobility and access to information.

We also work in partnership with other agencies to do this.

Our service is intended to support people to be able to do things for themselves rather than staff carrying them out on their behalf.

We hope that the outcomes of our services will be to:

- Promote quality of life, independence and inclusion
- Prevent homelessness and events leading to homelessness
- Rebuild lives
- Promote and enable opportunities for independent living

Typically, the support we offer includes things like...

- Assessments of the physical suitability of properties and arranging for aids and adaptations
- Advocacy with Social Services or local medical services and assisting you to organise access to other services
- Arranging referrals to specialist advice agencies such as Citizens' Advice Bureaux or debt counselling agencies
- Maximising your income through identifying which welfare benefits you are entitled to, assisting with filling in claim forms and liaising with benefits departments
- Ensuring your property is well maintained and helping you arrange visits from plumbers, builders etc or assisting you find someone to service appliances or carry out window cleaning or gardening
- Help to get home care packages or other services to help you remain in your home
- Providing information and links to local services
- Helping you get out and about and make connections in your community
- Support and advice with neighbour or landlord disputes

- Accessing grants to help you settle in to a new property

We provide “low level” housing related support, usually less than 5 hours per week (most people receive less than three hours support per week).

Support may be offered for short periods to help people settle in their homes or to help prevent them losing their homes.

Support may be also offered on a longer term basis for people who may need on-going assistance.

To be eligible for the support service, you:

- must be at risk of not being able to get or keep up a tenancy because of physical disability or sensory impairment
- must be able to hold a tenancy
- must need support in order to keep up a tenancy
- must want to live in independent accommodation and would benefit from regular contact with our staff
- must agree with the support needs assessment and support plan, and be willing to work with us
- must be able to cope in your tenancy with the level of support we provide.

How does Habinteg provide support?

Our Community Assistants provide support. They spend about 40% of their time on support work, the rest being taken up with housing management duties.

Some of our services have higher levels of support, and here staff may spend more time on support work.

In some of our floating support services, we have dedicated support workers who spend all of their time on support work.

Our support concerns physical disability. If you need assistance with other areas of support, such as mental health problems, we will “signpost” you to a more specialist support provider.

We work with you and, with other agencies if appropriate, to ensure that you have a choice about how the support we offer can best contribute to what you want to achieve.

How will I be involved in my support?

Before we can start providing support, we will need to find out what it is you want to do to be able to live independently and assess what support you need to do it. We will complete a support needs assessment and a support plan with you. These outline what both you and we agree to do, and how long we think it may take to do it.

The support will be reviewed at regular intervals, as agreed with you. You may also ask for a review at any time.

We will also ask you to sign a support agreement. This sets out what both you and we will do to work together to achieve the aims of the support plan. In supported housing, this agreement is included in the tenancy agreement.

Can I appeal against a decision Habinteg makes about my support needs?

Sometimes, we may think that someone's support needs are different from what they think they are themselves. For example, an applicant for accommodation with support maybe turned down because we think have higher support needs than we can provide for, and there is no alternative support provider

An appeal may be made against a decision, using our Complaints and Compliments Procedure. You appeal yourself, or you can ask someone to act on your behalf. Full details are in our Complaints Procedure, which you can ask for at any time.

Can I ask for support to be provided by someone other than Habinteg?

If the support you need is not the type of support that we can provide, we will try to "signpost" you to a provider who has the relevant skills and expertise.

What does support needs assessment and support planning mean?

Before we can provide you with support, we will need to assess with you what support you need to be able to live independently. We will also note any risks arising from the support need. We will agree a plan with you for delivering the support. You will be given a copy of your assessment and support plan.

The support assessment will look at whether you need support to deal with things like:

- participating in training or education
- accessing employment opportunities,
- establishing contact with external services / groups / friends / family,
- accessing assistive technology / aids and adaptations,
- dealing with problems around low income / incorrect benefits / other entitlement.

In some of our schemes where we do not provide support, we may still assess the support needs of applicants. When we decide whether to make an offer, we will take into account the applicant's need for a support service, and how it will be met. This will help us to work with the new tenant to ensure that they do not lose their tenancy because they may not be able to cope with independent living.

If an applicant for or a tenant living in general needs accommodation needs support, we can provide it only if the local authority agree either to extra funding or to swap support from another property. The tenant may then be subject to a support charge in addition to the rent.

What does risk assessment mean?

There is some risk associated with all activities. Mostly this is negligible, but occasionally some harm may come either to you or to our staff as a result of your support needs. Occasionally, there is a risk to you from not having your support needs met.

We do a risk assessment on the support needs we have identified with you to help us see if there are any risks, and to help manage those risks safely.

What is supported housing?

Habinteg has a contract with the local authority to provide support. There are two types of contract – floating support and supported housing. Most of our contracts are for supported housing.

Supported housing means that certain properties are designated as properties for people who need housing related support or special design features, such as wheelchair-standard accommodation.

In these properties, support is provided as a combined package with housing management – the Community Assistant provides both support and housing management. There is a charge for the support service, and this is included in the total charge payable on the property.

Because of the combined package of support and housing management, the supported housing properties are managed in a slightly different way to ordinary housing.

When we have vacancies, we give priority to applicants who need both the special design features of the property and the housing related support. An applicant's support needs assessment helps us to decide whether to make an offer of accommodation.

Although we give more priority to applicants who need both the support and the accommodation, people who need only the accommodation and not the support service may still apply. However, the support charge attached to the property will still be payable in full.

We also have two specialist support schemes, in Cornwall and Sefton. There are different lettings procedures for these schemes.

How much does it cost?

In supported housing, the support and the housing are provided as a single, combined package. A support charge is included in the total rental charge.

The support charge is set by the local authority. They review the amount of the charge each year. They tell us whether we can increase it, keep it the same, or reduce it, and by how much. Any changes in the amount of the support charge take place at the same time as the rent changes, usually in July each year.

The amount of the support charge varies between different local authorities, but is usually between £9.00 and £13.00 per week

How do I pay the support charge?

We keep a record of the weekly support charge payable and payments made into it. This is the support sub-account, which works just like a rent account.

If you are not eligible for a support charge subsidy from the local authority, you can pay the charge together with your rent payments. We will split the payments between the rent account and the support charge sub-account, always ensuring that the rent account has the first call on any payment you make.

You can get help towards the support charge, through a support charge subsidy. If you get Housing Benefit (even partial Housing Benefit), you will not have to pay the support charge at all. To get a subsidy, you will have to make a claim. This is usually done at the start of your tenancy, at the same time that you make a claim for Housing Benefit.

You may also get help towards the support charge even if you are working. Again, you will have to make a claim, through the Council's Fairer Charging Scheme. Your Community Assistant will be able to give you details of how to make a claim.

If you do get a support charge subsidy, the payment will be made directly to Habinteg by the local authority.

Do I have to pay the support charge?

In supported housing, the support and the housing are provided as a single, combined package, and the support charge is included in the total rental charge for the service. The tenancy agreement includes an obligation to pay the support charge, in the same way as there is an obligation to pay the service charge.

The support charge is payable for as long as you live in the supported accommodation, even if your needs change so that you no longer need support, or do not want support.

We can take action through the small claims court to recover unpaid support charges. We can also take possession action if the charge is still unpaid after

the small claims court decides in our favour.

Our approach to non-payment of the support charge is set out in our Support Services Charging Policy. You can request a copy of this at any time.

What if I live in supported housing but don't want or need support?

If your needs have changed so that you no longer need or want support, we will not insist that you continue receive it. However, you will still have to pay the support charge attached to the property.

If you have withdrawn from the support service, we will only provide general support related advice.

So, for example, if you ask for an adaptation, we will only advise you to apply through the Disabled Facilities Grant system. We will consider assisting you further only if you are unsuccessful in claiming a grant. You may, of course, "re-join" the support service, and we will then assess your changed support needs with you and draw up a new support plan.

If you do not need support because you are a non-disabled tenant who does not need the facilities in the property (for example, if you have succeeded to the tenancy), then, for as long as you live in the property, you will still have to pay the support charge.

However, we may ask you to leave the property if we need it for someone else with special needs. We will do our best to offer ensure suitable alternative accommodation.

If I live in supported housing, can I:

- Transfer?

You can transfer from one supported property to another. If this is in a different local authority, the support charge may be different from your existing one.

You can transfer from supported housing to unsupported housing by going through the Transfer Procedure. However, we would not be able to provide you with support in your new property, unless there was spare capacity in the support contract and the local authority agreed to the transfer of support to the new address.

- Do a mutual exchange?

You can do a mutual exchange, but we will need to know whether the incoming person needs support and needs the specially designed accommodation. We will carry out a support needs assessment of the incoming person before making a decision.

If the incoming person has no support needs, this may not prevent the exchange from going ahead, provided they need the adapted facilities of the property.

If the incoming person does not need either the support or the specialist design features of the accommodation, we will turn down the request

If the exchange goes ahead, the incoming person must agree to pay the support charge whether or not they wish to take up the support offered.

- Pass the property on to someone else (succession)?

A member of your household may have the right to succeed to the tenancy in some circumstances if you die whilst a tenant. Succession rights are detailed in your tenancy agreement.

If the person who succeeds to the tenancy does not need support or the facilities provided in the property, we may ask them to leave the property if we need it for someone else who does need these.

What if I live in short term accommodation?

Most of Habinteg's supported housing comprises permanent tenancies. However, we have one supported housing scheme in Cornwall which provides temporary supported housing for up to two years.

Because of this, the tenancies are assured shorthold tenancies. These do not have all of the rights of full assured tenancies. For example, there is no right of succession, nor a right to mutual exchange.

Also, in this scheme, the provision of support is fundamental to the rehabilitative purpose of the service. We will take seek to end the tenancy if the tenant breaks the support agreement or refuses to engage in the support provided.

What is floating support?

In floating support, the support lasts no longer than 2 years, usually. The support addresses specific support issues which can be met within the time limit agreed with the tenant. Once the support needs have been met, the service comes to an end. The tenant remains in their property, and the support is then available for someone else.

We carry out a support needs and risk assessment in the same way as in supported housing,

Before we start providing support, we will ask you to sign a support agreement. This sets out what both you and we will do to work together to achieve the aims of the support plan.

Under what circumstances can you or I end floating support?

You may decide to end the support agreement at any time. We may also end it under certain circumstances, such as:

- if the outcomes identified in your support plan have been achieved
- if you do not engage with the service
- if your support needs change so much that we cannot meet them.

If I come off floating support, can I come back onto it?

You may drop in and out of the support service as your needs change, though we will need to carry out a new needs assessment each time you wish to take up the service again, to take account of the changes.

How much does it cost?

In most cases, the floating support services are free.

What about confidentiality?

In order to provide the support you need as effectively as possible, we may need to discuss your circumstances with other professionals or organisations, such as Occupational Therapists or the Housing Benefit department. We will only do this with your permission.

You also have the right to see records we hold about you. Your right to access information is set out in our Confidentiality and Access to Information Policy, a copy of which is available on request.

What is Safeguarding?

It is an unfortunate fact of life that some people will exploit or abuse others. This can take a variety of forms, such as physical abuse, misusing someone's money, or neglect.

We think that people should be enabled to live and receive services in an environment that is free from prejudice and safe from abuse.

We think that exploitation or abuse is not acceptable in our properties. Where we have concerns that abuse of our tenants is occurring, we will report our concerns to Social Services for investigation. We will also work with Social Services in any plans they set up to deal with incidents of abuse.

If you have any concerns about potential abuse, please contact your Community Assistant. You can also get an advocate or representative to speak to us on your behalf if you want to.

If you would like a copy of our Safeguarding Policy, please contact your Community Assistant.

What are Professional Boundaries?

We do our best to provide a professional, objective and fair service to all our service users. Our staff receive training in the purpose and limits of their job, and all sign up to a Code of Conduct. We have professional boundaries to help us identify any behaviour which, well intentioned or not, could lessen the benefit of support to you.

If you feel that our staff are crossing these boundaries, and are not treating you in an open and fair way, then contact your Regional Housing Manager in either the Bradford or London offices to let us know.

How do I make a complaint?

If you are unhappy with any support related decision we make, or if we do not provide a support service that you have asked for, you may appeal using our Complaints Procedure. You can ask for a copy of this at any time. We will always let you know in writing the reasons for making our decisions.

You also have the right to complain to the local authority about our support service if you wish, though they will usually expect you to go through our complaints procedure first. You can ask your Community Assistant for details of who to contact in the local authority to make a complaint.